23: Franck--289-290 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians-1-2
116, 291, 286, 314, 515

"The women were usually the first to see us, for they were constantly bathing themselves and their naked urchins in the stream, and they were clever at getting into or out of their barrel-like single garment without unduly exposing themselves. I saw more bathing on that journey down the Nam-khan than during my two years in China, and less uncleanliness in all Laos than in the smallest Chinese village. The women of Luang Prabang, especially along the rivers, are no burden to their fathers and husbands so far as clothing is concerned. In every village we visited they were naked to the waist, and did not know it; at least [290] they did not seem to be conscious that in other, often less modest lands, such a costume might be frowned upon. They wore a single piece of cloth, spun from cotton grown on the spot, and woven on hand-looms under their long-legged houses. Colored in the thread with dyes made from nuts and vegetable growths of the region, this strip is simply wrapped about the waist. Or, in the case of a few of the youngest, which in that backward land still means the more modest women, the unmarried perhaps, or at least those who had not yet borne a child, it is wrapped about the lower two thirds of the breasts, with correspondingly more of the legs showing. Thus one recognized the girls of flapper age by their shapely brown legs and the matrons by their resemblance in costume to the Venus of Milo. Once a child has arrived, the exposure incident to suckling it seems to overcome virginal modesty, or in the absence of offspring pride no doubt soon joins carelessness in casting

out the habits of maidenhood, so that there were displayed the scrawny pendent udders of the sterile as well as the withered rags of old age. The sight of a white man appeared to move some of the women to cover their breasts, a mere matter of deftly raising the garment. Whether this gesture was a recognition of the susceptibility of the French--who surely could not have issued non-exposure decrees! --or a mere matter of politeness, like the male squat, there was no means of knowing."

23: Franck--294 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 142, 501, 515

"Bamboo rafts, with little houses on them, made their way more slowly down the stream, so placid now that it mirrored the ever-lower hills densely covered with jungle-forest, networks of lianas, some trees completely shrouded in vines, whole hillsides of huge banana-plumes, flashes of birds across them. Women wearing nothing but skirts were getting water from the river; others, especially at sundown, were bathing themselves and their naked children. Bonzes in dirty yellow robes, loafing, or horse-playing to use up the energy their calling does not permit them to waste in work or domestic happiness, showed themselves here and there along the way. The people seemed darker, burned to an almost Madrasi color."

23: Franck--341-342 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 342, 361, 515, 779

"The uncrowded, simple, but commodious houses of these Laosian villages are always set well apart and high above the ground, back among palm-trees, banana-plants, and the like. They do not have to crowd together and save all the arable land for rice to feed too numerous mouths, for here a gentle Buddhism takes place of an ancestor-worship so [342] ardent that offspring must be had at any effort and cost. Most families have round or square granaries like huge covered baskets made of wide woven splints and covered by a big thatch roof, all raised off the ground out of reach of rats. The simple houses themselves were of similar materials, a ladder or half a dozen bamboo or pole rungs leading up to the big porch at one end, and close to the floor, a tiny window or two that can be pushed open to one side. Such a village is a thousand per cent more pleasant than a Chinese town, even when there is no public stopping-place except in the same room with slightly supercilious priests who sometimes break sound sleep with their devotions. There is an incredible amount of bathing and great quiet compared to densely packed Chinese existence. Such a village is like a country home in its atmosphere, while those of China resemble tenement-living on the worst of East Sides."

68: Mouhot--272 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 155, 834, 515

"The men of this nation [HD: i. e. Luang Prabang] are dull and apathetic and full of small vices. The women are generally better, and some of them are even pretty in spite of their yellow skins, but they have little idea of modesty. The men and women all bathe together without any clothing. But for the people, Louang Prabang would be one of the most charming places in the world: the lake of Geneva does not present scenes more beautiful than many here by the river."

## A DRAGON APPARENT

000 There was a recognized place about a mile up the river, which was free from weed and rock, and once again, because the water was deep and swiftly running, it was very cold and refreshing. We had
● 515 been swimming round for an hour or so when we noticed a number of Laotian girls hanging about. They were not watching us, but sauntering backwards and forwards in twos and threes, chatting to each other. By the time there were twelve of them, Dupont, keeping well in the water called to them and asked if we were disturbing them in any way. One of the girls came to the edge of the bank, bowed, and looking down at her feet said that it was their usual bathing time, but that there was no hurry, of course. Dupont asked the girls if they would retire for a moment, and they walked a short distance away and stood in a preoccupied circle while we got out of the water. We then dressed quickly and walked on down the path leading to their village. After about a hundred yards we looked back. All the girls, quite naked, were in the water. At that moment two bonzes were strolling slowly along the bank past them; but the girls paid no attention. The bonzes were wrapped in the mantle of holy invisibility.

622 When we reached the village, Dupont asked punctiliously for
304 the headman, making the excuse that he wanted to visit the pagoda. It was quite evident that this headman was in the good graces of the garrison, and probably supplied them with labour. He was very dignified and had a fine house, with European furniture. Although barefooted, he wore a French suit. On the suggestions of the soldier from the camp he took down his trousers and showed us his legs, which from ankles to thighs were tattooed, in the local manner, so
796 closely that he seemed to be wearing stockings. The annual *boun* [1]
782 had just been celebrated at the local pagoda and a bonze was in the
532 act of sweeping into a heap the votive offerings with which the floor
285 of the courtyard was littered. There was a great collection of elephants, buffaloes, peacocks and tigers, all woven in basket-work. The kind of thing that Picasso produces when he is not painting, but perhaps rather better. They seemed to me to be of



[1] [i.e., religious festival.--Analyst]